



# VISTA

50 years

Volunteers In Service To America

Community Summits & Events

★ **ORGANIZER KIT** ★

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
1965-2015

Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 

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## OVERVIEW AND GOALS

### Overview

For the past 50 years, VISTA has proven to be one of the most effective tools for building community and addressing poverty. We are excited to commemorate this milestone with a year of events and initiatives that position AmeriCorps VISTA for 50 more years of catalytic change across the country. Because of volunteers and engaged AmeriCorps VISTA community members like you, we can continue to grow a community that not only understands **why** eliminating poverty is important, but also has the skills, creativity, and persistence to make it happen.

This Organizer Kit is for you: community leaders who will celebrate the 50th Anniversary of AmeriCorps VISTA by organizing meaningful action to fight poverty and build community. This kit contains the resources you need to plan and carry out successful events over the course of VISTA's anniversary year.

### Goals

The AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary will spark a series of events throughout the year to engage core leaders like you, and build momentum for the next 50 years. Our goals are to:

- Inspire past, present, and future AmeriCorps VISTA members, sponsors, and supporters by spotlighting the longstanding service program as an innovative solution to ending poverty
- Engage more individuals and communities in our work, and
- Celebrate and innovate!

## DESCRIPTION OF CORE ACTIVITIES

### National Solutions Summit: *February 25, 2015*



The National Solutions Summit will kick off the AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary celebration on February 25, 2015. This convening will pay tribute to VISTA's proud

history of addressing poverty, and set forth a vision for developing future solutions.

This highly visible event will feature a diverse line up of speakers, from well-known experts to alumni to everyday people who are working on poverty issues in their communities. They will share their knowledge and spur conversations on a broad range of topics related to poverty, such as health, education, art, the environment, and related issues. The Summit will be held at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. and will be live-streamed for a national audience. It will set the stage for a series of Community Solutions Summits and Events around the country.

### Community Solutions Summits: *Throughout 2015*



Community Solutions Summits are the cornerstone of 50th anniversary celebrations. With your organizing power, we will take AmeriCorps VISTA to communities

across the country and challenge people to create solutions for tackling poverty where they live.

### Community Events: *Throughout 2015*



The AmeriCorps VISTA 50th anniversary is a great opportunity to bring together service-minded, solution-oriented people. There are many possibilities and formats

for successful events to celebrate VISTA service. We encourage you to convene local leaders, present a panel discussion, or just host a party – all types of events are welcome! Whatever shape your event takes, be sure to tell us about it at [VISTA50@cns.gov](mailto:VISTA50@cns.gov)! (See [how to register](#).)

### Community Solutions Spotlights: *Throughout 2015*



We will shine a spotlight on VISTA's history, impact, and solutions in five diverse regions of the country, culminating with an end-of-year celebration at the LBJ

Presidential Library. These Community Solutions Spotlights will follow a different schedule and take place every other month throughout 2015:

- April - Philadelphia, PA
- June - Appalachian Kentucky
- August - Salt Lake City, UT
- October - Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN
- December - Austin, TX

### Solutions Showcase: *December 2015*



The Solutions Showcase is an opportunity to share your community designed solutions to poverty – and see how other communities are planning to

address poverty in 2015 and beyond. You can submit photos and videos, highlighting the process of refining and implementing community-based solutions to poverty. The Showcase will help raise public awareness of AmeriCorps VISTA, stimulate broader and deeper thinking about U.S. poverty, inspire others to serve, and showcase solutions generated throughout this anniversary year.



## HELPFUL TOOLS FOR GETTING STARTED

### Organize a Community Solutions Summit or Event

With your leadership, we can make these events a huge success. In this kit, we've provided a step-by-step guide with accompanying materials that will lead you to a successful event. Refer to the [Organizer Checklist](#) to track tasks before, during, and after your event. Below, you will find tools to aid you in each of the 7 steps to organize a successful event:

#### Step 1: Plan your event logistics

- [Secure an event date and location](#)

#### Step 2: Register your event

- [Registration site](#)

#### Step 3: Organize your event and recruit participants

- [Build a leadership team](#)
- [Engage students in your event](#)
- [Outreach to elected officials](#)
- [Recruit and coordinate speakers and facilitators](#)
- [Recruit and manage volunteers for your event](#)

#### Step 4: Promote the event in your community

- [Promote your event](#)
- [Digital promotion strategies](#)
- [Email your network](#)
- [AmeriCorps VISTA 50th logo](#)
- [AmeriCorps VISTA 50th messaging](#)

#### Step 5: Develop an agenda

- [Sample agenda: Community Solutions Summit](#)
- [Sample Agenda: Community Event](#)

#### Step 6: Host the summit

- [Day of the event checklist](#)

#### Step 7: Follow up!

- [Thank you template](#)
- [Evaluation sample](#)

## ORGANIZER CHECKLIST

Here is a checklist of things to consider as you organize your AmeriCorps VISTA 50th event. Use this list along with the accompanying materials to help you with each step along the way.

### Before the event

- ☐ Recruit a leadership team to help you organize
- ☐ Select a date and location
- ☐ Register your event
- ☐ Recruit speakers, volunteers, and facilitators for the day of the event
- ☐ Develop the agenda
- ☐ Send invitations to potential participants (at least 6 weeks prior)
- ☐ Start promoting your event through traditional and social media
- ☐ Confirm event logistics with venue (1 week prior)
- ☐ Provide your volunteers and facilitators with event logistics information
- ☐ Send reminder to registered participants (1 week and 1 day prior)
- ☐ Create/print event signage
- ☐ Create/print nametags or purchase blank tags for participants to fill in during registration

### During the event

- ☐ Register all attendees
- ☐ Follow the agenda provided in this kit
- ☐ Take pictures and videos that you can share on social media
- ☐ Distribute and collect the evaluation
- ☐ Thank everyone for attending
- ☐ See [Day of the Event Checklist](#), for further details

### Post - summit

- ☐ Send a thank-you email to all guests
- ☐ Post photos of your event on social media and use #VISTA50
- ☐ When possible, make sure to tag @AmeriCorps so the whole national service community can share your success

## SECURE/REGISTER AN EVENT DATE AND LOCATION

Whether you're an expert event planner or organizing for the first time, we've put together a list of things for you to consider, to guide you throughout the process:

### Pick a date.

Choose a timeframe between February and December 2015. You may consider holding your event on a weekday evening or weekend so that more people can join. When selecting a date, be sure to consider potential conflicts (holidays, local sports team schedules, university calendars, etc.) Also, think about how you can tie in with existing community events and established organizations to draw even more people.

### How many people do you expect at the event?

30? 50? 200? Sort through your contact lists and set a goal. A good baseline is 30 people for smaller communities and up to 200 people for large communities.

### What type of space/set-up do you need?

Think open space accommodating your audience. Ideal features to keep in mind include central access (transit/walkability), natural light, and meaningful to the community. Refer to the agenda to get a sense of the type of space you might prefer. Think about the best size and configuration of the space to encourage interaction among your participants, e.g. auditorium with break-out rooms, large gathering space with room for speakers, tables set-up in rounds.

### What equipment comes with the space and what do you need to provide?

Make sure to ask what equipment comes with the space, and what you need to bring:

- A/V equipment: sound system, screen/projector, laptop
- Tables/chairs, tablecloths
- Whiteboards/markers, easels/paper
- If you plan to live-stream the National Summit: computer, screen/projector, speakers, high-speed internet access, and Wi-Fi

### Make sure your event is accessible to all participants.

Please refer to these ADA guidelines to [make your event accessible](#).

### Places to consider.

Many places will donate their space for a good cause. Think about:

- Local schools/universities with meeting, auditorium, or classroom space
- Places of worship
- Community centers
- Office space of a partner, friend, neighbor, or community-minded business

### ★ Register your event. ★

Once you have secured the date and location, please [register your event](#).

## BUILD A LEADERSHIP TEAM

Recruiting a leadership team is essential to the success of your event. With a motivated team who is passionate about AmeriCorps VISTA and ending poverty, you can accomplish much more than you could alone.

### Team roles

Recruit people who have a diverse set of skills, experience, and networks. They should also complement the skills you have. Here are some key roles to think about:

**Recruitment coordinator:** Brings together and manages a team who will drive people to the event. (See: [Promote Your Event](#)).

**Logistics coordinator:** Coordinates all logistics related to the event, including location, food/beverages, supplies, transportation, etc.

**Speaker & facilitator coordinator:** Identifies speakers to showcase AmeriCorps VISTA's local impact and recruits facilitators who will guide discussions over the course of your event.

**Promotions coordinator(s):** One or more individuals who can get the word out about the event. For example: one coordinator could manage social media and digital promotion, while two others handle community outreach and contact local leaders to help build a buzz about the event.

**Volunteer coordinator:** Recruits and coordinates volunteers for the day of the event to staff registration, welcome participants, organize refreshments, take pictures, tweet & post pictures, etc.

**Fundraising coordinator:** Reaches out to potential donors and requests both cash and in-kind donations to secure event venues, provide food/beverage, and underwrite any additional costs for the event.\*

### Building your team

When you're thinking about whom to recruit onto your leadership team, consider the following:

- Does this person understand the vision of what we're trying to accomplish?
- Is this person an alum or have a tie to the AmeriCorps VISTA program?
- Will this person add an important skill set to the team?
- Commitment is key! Are these individuals committed to the success of the event? Can they make the time? Are they able to follow through on their promises and responsibilities?

### With a committed team, you'll ensure the success of your event!

\* While AmeriCorps VISTA members and leaders are encouraged to help in the planning of AmeriCorps VISTA 50th anniversary events, they may not serve as the Fundraising Coordinator nor may they solicit or receive any cash and/or in-kind donations. Please use the following protocol to address the appropriate fundraising activities of Sponsors and VISTA leaders, and VISTA members for locally hosted AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Events:



## BUILD A LEADERSHIP TEAM

**For sponsors:** We recommend identifying alumni and individuals from the community to take on the role of Fundraising Coordinator on AmeriCorps VISTA 50th planning committees for local events. The Fundraising Coordinator on AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Planning Committees may not be an AmeriCorps VISTA member or VISTA leader. Also, no AmeriCorps VISTA member or leader may solicit or receive donations, whether cash or in-kind. However, AmeriCorps VISTA members and leaders are encouraged to assist in the planning and implementation of AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Events. AmeriCorps VISTA leaders and members may discuss the events and community participation with local citizens and these discussions may include general discussions about the opportunity to make donations for local events.

**For AmeriCorps VISTA members and leaders:** No AmeriCorps VISTA member or leader may solicit or take receipt of donations, whether cash or in-kind. However, AmeriCorps VISTA members and leaders are encouraged to assist in the planning and implementation of AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary events. AmeriCorps VISTA members and leaders may discuss the events and community participation with local citizens and these discussions may include general discussions about the opportunity to make donations for local events.

**Additional Questions:** If a Sponsor, or an AmeriCorps VISTA member or leader, has questions regarding appropriate fundraising activities or whether a VISTA member or leader is prohibited from engaging in a particular fundraising activity for the VISTA 50th Anniversary Events, please direct your questions to your CNCS State Office, and then to [VISTA50@cns.gov](mailto:VISTA50@cns.gov).

## ENGAGE STUDENTS IN THE EVENT

Students are an ideal demographic to engage in your event. They bring a fresh perspective and are easy to recruit because they often are already engaged with community and social justice issues. Reach out to clubs and activities in which students participate heavily: faith-based groups, student councils, social clubs, and community service groups.

### For college students:

- Make sure your promotional materials are widely distributed in areas frequented by students. Put up flyers on campus and in nearby coffee shops.
- Invite college students to be on your planning committee.
- Ask students to recruit other students and university-related volunteers.
- Partner with groups that already work with college students on related issue areas (e.g., Campus Compact, Model UN, Rotary, Key Club, faith-based organizations, and NAACP).
- Connect with faculty – suggest a service-learning project tied to coursework related to your event.
- Spread the word about the summit through campus email lists, such as a weekly calendar – or attend campus events; a display table at an activities fair can reach large numbers of students.
- Eliminate possible barriers: transportation, scheduling, cost.
- Work with Residence Life to organize an opportunity to meet with students; invite them to participate, and offer to train them as volunteers.
- Work with a campus community service director and service organizations or clubs on campus.

### For younger students:

- Use your event as a launching point for youth engagement.
- Involve organizations and communities in which youth already participate.
- Foster youth/adult partnerships, such as Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program. If you have an active mentoring program in your community, ask if they would promote the event with mentor-mentee pairs.
- Focus on historically disengaged youth populations.
- Ask youth what issues interest them, and what changes they would like to see.
- Involve youth in planning and leadership.
- Bring youth to other neighborhoods to serve and see the challenges in the community.



## OUTREACH TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

The Community Summits and Events are great opportunities to engage local and national elected officials.

Here are some tips:

### 1. Ask



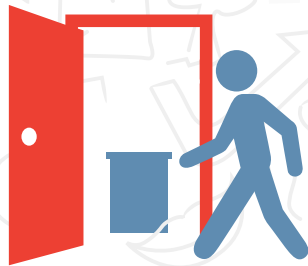
### 2. Be specific



### 3. Announce



### 4. Get connected



### 5. Communicate



1. First, you have to ask. When contacting an elected official's office about your event, ask to speak to the individual who handles the official's calendar. Express the goals for the event and state how it could improve the community. Elected officials may want to be engaged with the event if they understand how it might improve their community. Additionally, elected officials may be interested in opportunities to connect with constituents and learn more about community needs.
2. Be as specific as possible about the anticipated size of the event and its date/time/location; give a brief overview of the event's agenda.
3. Ask the elected official to announce your event to constituents and the media. If your elected official cannot attend, you can ask him/her to:
  - Send a representative; or
  - Issue a proclamation for your event.
4. Contact information for Senate and House members is at [Senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov) and [House.gov](https://www.house.gov). Other national and state-level elected officials can be found [here](#).
5. Let us know whom you contact by emailing the Office of Government Affairs at CNCS, PJ Andrews at [pandrews@cns.gov](mailto:pandrews@cns.gov).

## RECRUIT AND COORDINATE SPEAKERS & FACILITATORS

Tips for recruiting and managing facilitators and speakers:

### Recruitment

**Speakers:** Identify speakers that have a relationship with AmeriCorps VISTA, have experience working on poverty related issues, and have innovative stories and ideas to share. Currently serving members, alumni, and beneficiaries are a great place to start! Local leaders and celebrities can help bring visibility and interest to your event.

**Facilitators:** For your event, you'll need facilitators to help guide participants as they generate ideas to address poverty-related issues in your community. Facilitators keep conversations creative, lively, relevant, and positive. A skilled facilitator will help great ideas bubble to the top, and allow everyone to contribute.

Most of all, facilitators are good listeners. They need not be the experts in the room; sometimes it's more helpful if they are not, though they should have some knowledge of the topic. Facilitators should pick out the good ideas and help synthesize the points people are making. They should generate questions to help the group to think in new ways, and ensure that everyone has a chance to participate and get their ideas to the group.

Make a list of people who you think would be good speakers and facilitators and ask if they would be willing to volunteer their time and talents.

### Preparation

Work with your speakers to help prepare their talks. Find some great tips [here](#) on how to approach potential speakers and prepare them for an engaging and meaningful talk.

Make sure your facilitators feel prepared. Be sure they have a clear sense of the goals of the event, and of what you hope will come out of their sessions.

Make sure facilitators have the supplies they need to lead sessions, such as whiteboards, easels, sticky notes, butcher paper, and markers.

### At the event

On the day of the event, make sure your speakers and facilitators feel comfortable with the setup, and walk them through the day's events before everything starts, or arrange a call in advance to let everyone know what to expect. Give them special nametags, so people can identify them.

### Thank your speakers and facilitators

Be sure to thank your speakers and facilitators publically at the event, and thank them after the event, in writing, for giving their time and helping to make the event a success!



## RECRUIT AND MANAGE VOLUNTEERS FOR THE EVENT

For a well-run event, volunteers are a must! Here are some tips for recruiting and managing volunteers:

### Just ask

The key to recruiting volunteers is to ask! Consider:

- The individuals most excited about the event, and reach out to them.
- Close friends who have committed to coming, and who can help.
- Emailing participants, asking for volunteers.

### Know what you need

Plan ahead! To know how many volunteers you'll need, what their roles may be, and what skills may be required, you need a general sense of how many people will attend the event.

Here are some potential roles for volunteers:

**Volunteer captain:** the day of the event will be very busy. Have a volunteer captain who can manage all of the volunteers and answer any questions that day.

**Registration:** welcome and check-in participants.

**Ushers:** direct attendees to the right rooms during breakout sessions, and keep the event on schedule.

**Timers:** keep time during sessions.

**Facilitators:** help run sessions and facilitate innovative ideas!

**Speaker handlers:** greet speakers / special guests, and ensure they know where to go and when.

(See [Recruit and Coordinate Speakers and Facilitators](#))

### Create shifts

Some volunteers may not be able to attend the entire event; working in shifts of an hour or two at a time will allow more volunteers to participate and enjoy the event.

### Make a sign-up sheet

An online sign-up sheet – a Google Docs or Excel spreadsheet – makes it easier for people to commit to the project, and keeps track of where people have committed to be, and when.

### Follow up the day before the event

Your volunteer captain should remind people what they have signed up to do, and make sure they know what it entails. Give them a contact number for you or the volunteer captain, in case they have questions.

### Say thank you!

Be sure to thank your volunteers at the event and afterwards with a nice note or token of appreciation!

## PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

A good turnout is the key to a successful event. Here are some tips for getting the word out and getting people to the event:

### Building a recruitment team

A recruitment team will tap community networks to ensure broad reach and commitment to attendance. One person on your leadership team should be in charge of recruitment. That person can build a team of 3-15 people, with each committed to recruiting at least five people to the event. The recruiters ensure that people sign up online, and are responsible for confirming attendance of those who have signed up.

### Promote within your network



**In-Person:** Whenever you talk to people, mention the upcoming event and your role in it. Ask people to attend!



**Phone:** There are certain people you want to make sure attend to the event; call them and personally let them know about it.



**Digital:** See [digital promotion strategies](#) for tips about using email and social media platforms to get the word out.

### Low-hanging Fruit

There are people in your community who are already engaged with the key issues challenging your neighborhoods – not necessarily prominent leaders, but everyday people who show active commitment by doing community work. These are people you want to engage in your event: people who think about these issues regularly, including active volunteers in community organizations, staff at local nonprofits, and those who can speak from experience about the challenges and solutions they've seen. Actively target these people – call them, email them, and make sure they know about the event!

### Promote the event to the community at large

There are many ways to recruit people who are in your community but outside of your network. Once your event is officially registered, you can request a flyer template via [VISTA50@cns.gov](mailto:VISTA50@cns.gov). Share the customized flyer in all the places that are regularly frequented by people in your community – a popular local restaurant, grocery store, coffee shop, place of worship. Also, check for bulletin boards at your city hall, local businesses, and schools. Get included in the events listing in your local newspapers. Inquire if your local radio stations have community bulletin boards that they read on air.

### Building a sphere of influence

In every community, there are leaders who inspire and influence other members of the community. Think about people of influence you know – a religious leader, a non-profit leader, a well-respected member of the community, a celebrity, musicians and artists, a university professor – and reach out to ask for their support and even their attendance at the event. And ask if they can help promote the event to their communities. Make sure to give them all of the needed information, including some fliers or a blurb they can put in their newsletter. This kit also includes specific tips for [outreach to elected officials](#).

## DIGITAL PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

Know your audience, and use the digital tools that will reach them where they interact online. Here are some suggested digital tools and tips for how to use them to promote your event:

### Email

It's an effective way to reach a lot of people at once, follow up and build momentum. Here are some easy steps:

- Create an email list of all the people you know in your area.
- Send an email introducing the event, and explaining why you've decided to get involved. This kit contains a [sample email](#) you can use to introduce the event to others. Include the [Get Involved video](#) to generate excitement and help explain the event.
- Send the invitation – at least three weeks in advance with reminders 1 week and 1 day before the event. Include updates on the planning process so that people feel engaged. For example: if a well-known speaker just agreed to join the event, make sure to include that in follow-up emails.
- Send personal emails to people you specifically want at the event; you can simply forward the general announcement with a personal note – for example: “Hi, I just wanted to make sure you saw this, because you would be the perfect candidate to come to this event.”
- Encourage people to spread the word and forward emails to others who may be interested.

### Facebook

Here are some tips for promoting your event on Facebook:

- Create a Facebook event. Include an official sign-up link for your event.
- Invite your friends, and ask them to invite others to the event.
- Follow up with people who say they're attending – make sure they sign up on the website.
- Continue to post updates on the event page.
- Share the sample posts found on the [AmeriCorps VISTA 50th](#) website.

### Twitter

Twitter can help build “buzz,” especially during your event. Here are some tips for maximizing Twitter's effectiveness:

- Use the hashtag #VISTA50 for advance publicity and real-time dialogue during the event.
- For promotion, always include the link to the event sign-up page.
- Engage people in your community by mentioning them in your tweets. For example: “We're so excited for #VISTA50. Are you @VISTAbuzz @amybrown? Join us! [hyperlink]”
- Share sample tweets found on the [AmeriCorps VISTA 50th website](#).

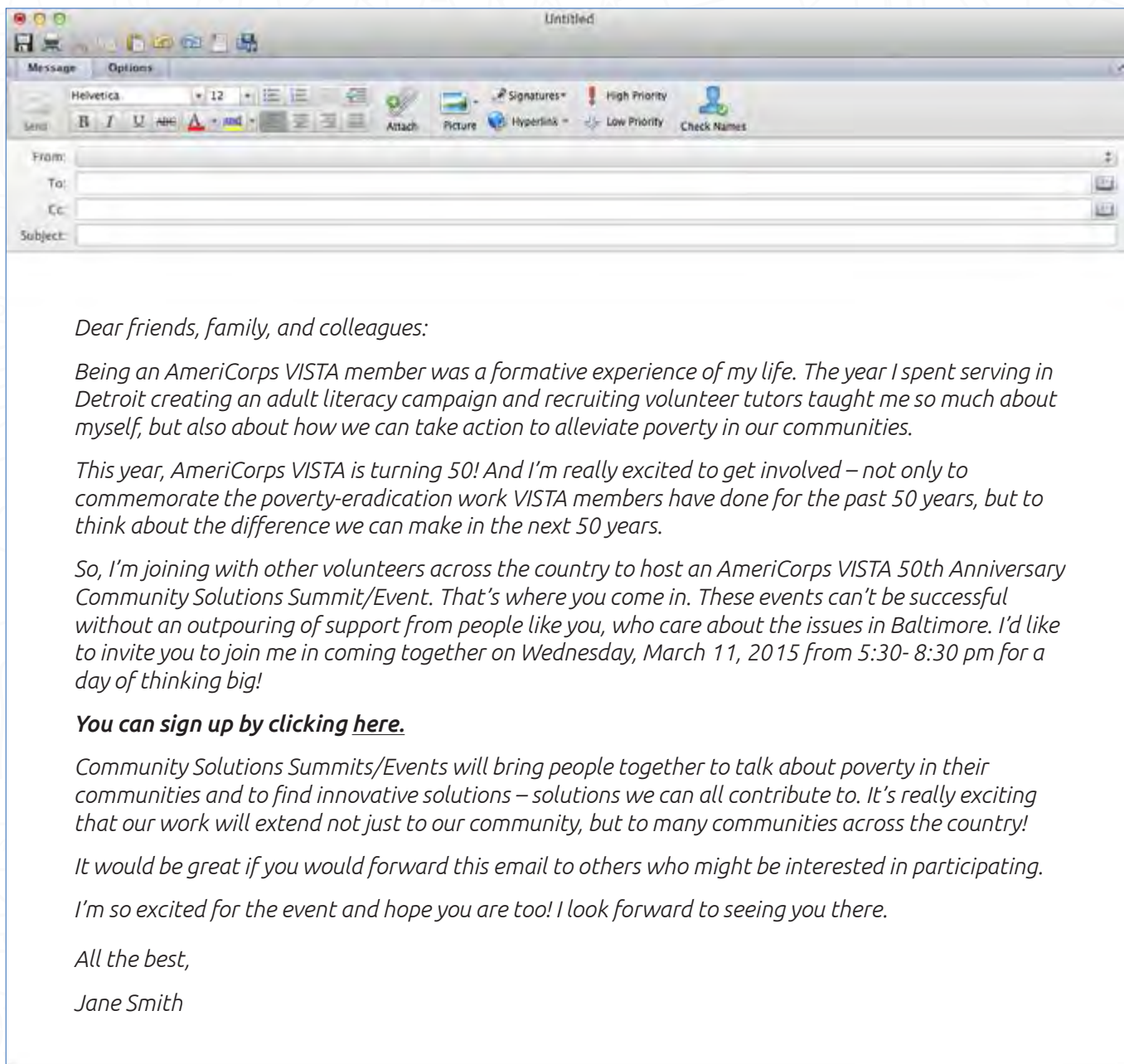
### Other platforms

Too many platforms can be overwhelming and hard to manage, but if resources permit, you might consider using Instagram and/or Tumblr:

- Instagram. Post photos of your summit to really make the day come alive. Tag photos with #VISTA50 and be sure to follow CNCS' National Service account!
- Tumblr. A user-friendly forum that can host blogs, photos, and quotes.

## EMAIL YOUR NETWORK

### Sample: alumni perspective





## AMERICORPS VISTA 50TH LOGO

The official logos for the AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary are below. Please use them in correspondence or materials for your event.

- As part of the branding process, official artwork must always be used when reproducing this symbol.
- The elements are fixed and should never be redrawn or altered in any way.
- The AmeriCorps VISTA 50th logo is available in two formats to fit any composition.
- Logos for AmeriCorps VISTA or other national service programs may only be used for official CNCS purposes or with CNCS approval. For approval to use these logos, please contact [VISTA50@cns.gov](mailto:VISTA50@cns.gov).

### Condensed logo



### Full logo



# VISTA

50 years

Volunteers In Service To America



# AMERICORPS VISTA 50TH MESSAGING

## Messaging

### Talking points

- AmeriCorps VISTA is a cost-effective solution to America's toughest problems
- AmeriCorps VISTA builds capacity within and strengthens the impact of our nation's nonprofits
- AmeriCorps VISTA has a long history of establishing and supporting programs that address poverty in America
- AmeriCorps VISTA is poised for even greater impact and growth

### Key messages

#### **AmeriCorps VISTA is a cost-effective solution to America's toughest problems.**

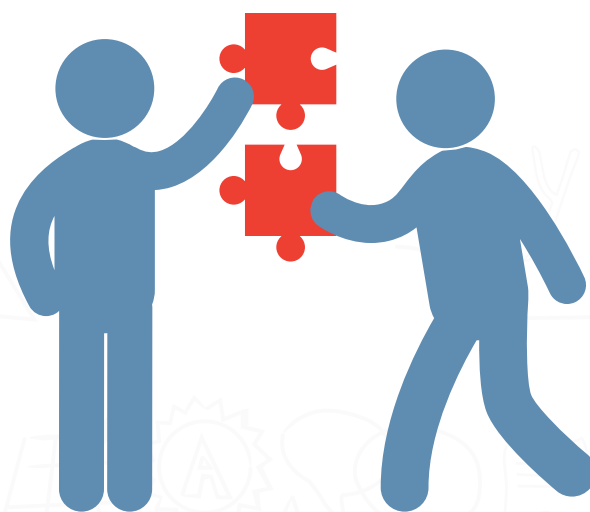
**Service is a solution:** More than 7,000 AmeriCorps VISTA members improve the lives of millions of our most vulnerable citizens each year. AmeriCorps VISTA members' impact is proven and measurable.

**Economic opportunity:** Economic Opportunity is the significant focus area of AmeriCorps VISTA. AmeriCorps VISTA members create or expand projects that help people find employment, move into safe and affordable housing, and become financially independent.

**Veterans and military families:** AmeriCorps VISTA recruits veterans and military family members to serve as AmeriCorps VISTAs. In addition, VISTA members assist with projects that serve low-income veterans and military families. VISTA members served 115,000 veteran and military families in FY 2013.

**Healthy futures:** AmeriCorps VISTA members support organizations that meet health needs, including access to food resources and health care, for economically disadvantaged individuals.

**Education:** Education remains AmeriCorps VISTA's largest focus area, totaling more than 35 percent of all new projects developed in FY 2013. AmeriCorps VISTA members perform service with schools and community organizations that focus on improving school readiness, reading at grade level, college access, and other educational outcomes for the economically disadvantaged.



## AMERICORPS VISTA 50TH MESSAGING

**Serving with AmeriCorps VISTA is a formative and defining experience for members.**

**Preparing the 21st century workforce:** AmeriCorps VISTA is a pathway to economic opportunity that provides members with valuable skills, leadership abilities, and experience to help jumpstart their careers.

**Expanding educational opportunity:** AmeriCorps VISTA members earn Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards, helping alums further their education goals. To date, AmeriCorps VISTA members have earned more than \$330 million.

**Building community leaders:** An AmeriCorps longitudinal study found that AmeriCorps alumni are more attached to their communities, aware of community challenges, and empowered to address them.

**AmeriCorps VISTA builds capacity within and strengthens the impact of our nation's nonprofits.**

**Building capacity:** AmeriCorps VISTA members strengthen and support organizations by building infrastructure, expanding community partnerships, securing long-term resources, coordinating training for participants, and much more. These capacity-building activities enable organizations to provide better services to low-income individuals and communities.

**Mobilizing volunteers:** AmeriCorps VISTA is a powerful catalyst for community volunteering. In FY 2013 AmeriCorps VISTA members recruited, trained, and supervised more than 1.3 million community volunteers for the organizations they serve.

**AmeriCorps VISTA has a long history of establishing and supporting programs that address poverty in America.**

**Early success:** Within the first decade, 1965-1975, the VISTA program helped develop a range of projects around the United States. Projects included block watch clubs, credit unions, agricultural cooperatives, community groups, and small businesses. Many of these entities still thrive today—including some of the first Head Start programs and Job Corps sites.

**Innovative programs:** Throughout the 1990s, AmeriCorps VISTA members helped develop low-income housing cooperatives, created programs to help people transition from welfare to work, and provided constructive out-of-school activities for disadvantaged youth.

**Bigger and stronger than ever:** Today, AmeriCorps VISTA is larger, stronger, and more vital than it has ever been. More than 7,000 members—who serve in more than 4,000 communities and projects nationwide—continue to address the root causes of poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA is focusing on new programs and partnerships to address poverty within the context of today's realities.

**Recent partnerships:** Working with Google and Points of Light, AmeriCorps VISTAs and other skilled volunteers helped train poverty-focused nonprofits to create tech plans to help them work more efficiently and increase their effectiveness.

## AMERICORPS VISTA 50TH MESSAGING

**AmeriCorps VISTA is poised for even greater impact and growth.**

**AmeriCorps VISTA has strong momentum:** President Obama knows first-hand the power of citizens to get things done and is deeply committed to investing in service and community solutions.

*"If you're an employer who wants to hire talented, dedicated, patriotic, skilled, tireless, energetic workers, look to AmeriCorps. Citizens who perform national service are special. You want them on your team."*

– President Obama, September 12, 2014

**Pipeline to public service:** The [Employers of National Service](#) initiative builds a talent pipeline to connect AmeriCorps alumni with leading employers from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to create recruitment, hiring, and advancement opportunities.

**Bipartisan support:** There is a growing recognition from members of Congress, Governors, and Mayors of both parties that national service is an essential strategy to address critical problems.

### Fast facts

- 7,000: AmeriCorps VISTAs members serve each year.
- 190,000: Number of VISTAs who have served since the program began in 1965.
- 4,000: Number of communities and organizations where AmeriCorps VISTAs serve throughout the 50 United States and territories.
- 1.3 million: Number of community volunteers AmeriCorps VISTAs engaged during FY 2013.
- \$160 million: The amount of cash and in-kind resources AmeriCorps VISTAs raised in support of anti-poverty programs during FY 2013.
- Since VISTA was incorporated into AmeriCorps in 1994 more than 90,000 individuals have served as AmeriCorps members.
  - 1 billion: Total number of hours served by AmeriCorps members since 1994.
  - 25,000: Number of nonprofits, faith-based and community organizations, schools, and other sites that AmeriCorps members serve with annually.





# SAMPLE AGENDA: COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS SUMMIT

## Meet & mingle

Open doors 30 min prior to start

## I. Opening [10 min]

- Welcome
- Introductions

## II. Impact of AmeriCorps VISTA past and present [10 min]

- History of VISTA in our community and state

## III. AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Campaign [5 min]

- Overview + goals + components

## IV. State of poverty in our community [15 min]

- Key issues, emerging trends, and data snapshot
- View selected talks from the National Solutions Summit

## V. Community vision [30 min]

- New York Times headline activity
- Common elements of the visions

## VI. Solutions & priorities [45-60 min]

- All-on-the-wall activity to identify solutions
- Prioritize solutions
- Form workgroups

## VII. Community Solutions work groups [30 min]

*Each Work Group will:*

- Decide on a group name and logo
- Write a brief description of the solution they will focus on
- Identify obstacles and opportunities for advancing the solution
- Report out

## VIII. Closing: wrap-up + thank you [10 min]

- Report out on summit/event experience
- Questions or comments
- Celebratory reception (optional)

## SAMPLE AGENDA: COMMUNITY EVENT

### Meet & mingle

Open doors 30 min prior to start

### I. Opening [10 min]

- Welcome
- Introductions

### II. Impact of AmeriCorps VISTA past and present [10 min]

- History of VISTA in our community and state

### III. AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Campaign [5 min]

- Overview + goals + components

### IV. State of poverty in our community [15 min]

- Key issues, emerging trends, and data snapshot
- View selected talks from the National Solutions Summit

### V. Talks from local speakers [30-60 min]

- AmeriCorps VISTA members, alumni, sponsors
- Beneficiaries
- Local leaders and celebrities

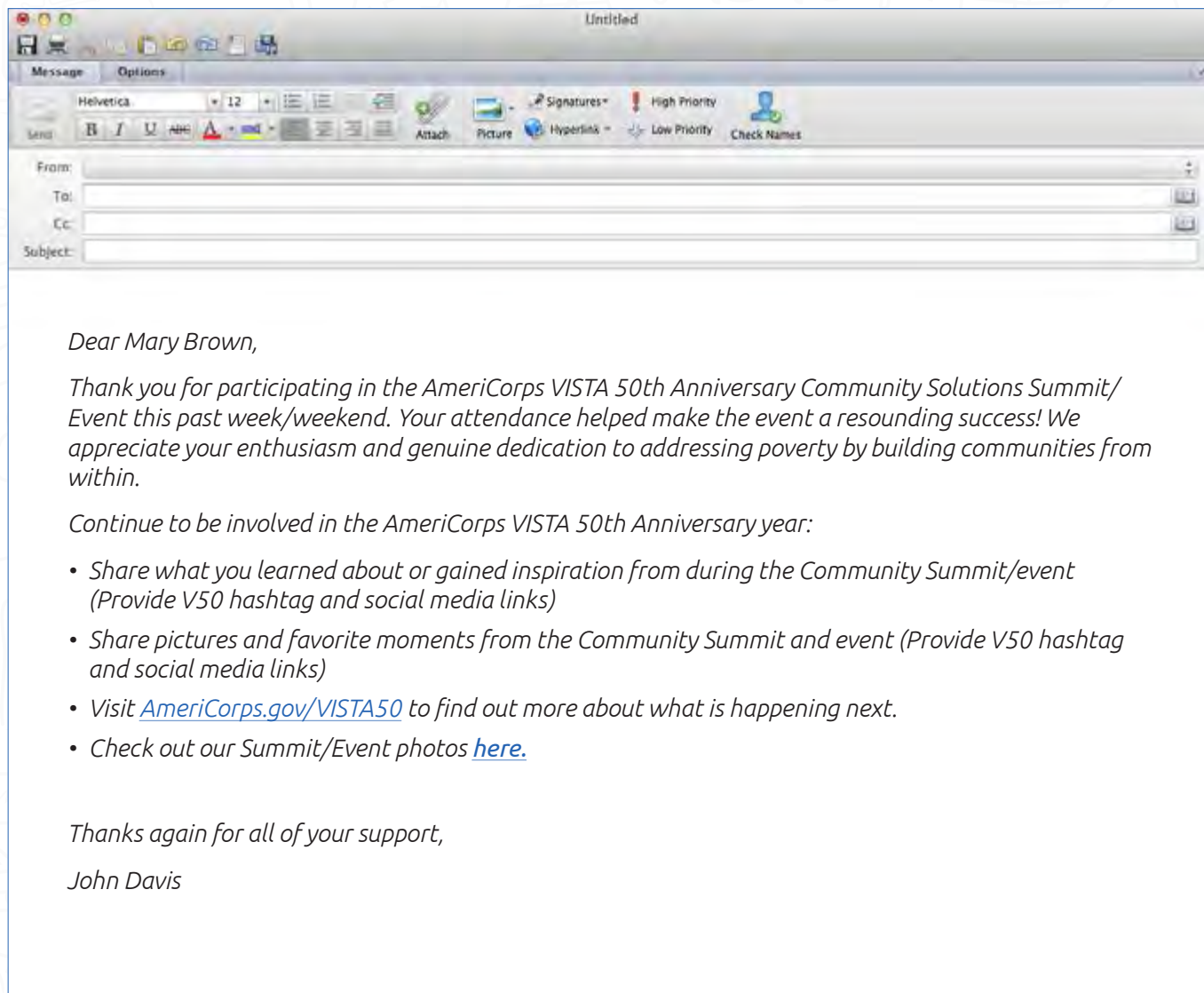
### VI. Closing: wrap-up + thank you [10 min]

- Report out on summit/event experience
- Questions or comments
- Celebratory reception (optional)

## DAY OF THE EVENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Prepare your opening remarks if you are speaking- you can talk about whatever connects you to the AmeriCorps VISTA program and why you felt compelled to play a significant role in the event
- ☐ Double check that you have all your needed supplies (signage, nametags, thumb drive with presentations, laptop, index cards, dot stickers, white board markers/eraser, flip chart paper, etc.)
- ☐ Get to your venue 1-2 hours early to set up; direct your leadership team, facilitators, and other volunteers to be there early as well
- ☐ Set-up signage and prep registration tables with name tags
- ☐ Have volunteer hosts create a warm atmosphere by welcoming guests, distributing programs and answering questions
- ☐ Register all attendees
- ☐ Greet speakers and community leaders and direct them to their designated seating, if necessary
- ☐ Follow the agenda provided in this toolkit
- ☐ Check in with members of your team, throughout the day
- ☐ Take pictures and videos that you can share on social media using applicable hashtag, #VISTA50
- ☐ Distribute and collect the evaluation
- ☐ Thank everyone for attending!

## THANK YOU TEMPLATE



The screenshot shows a Mac Mail application window titled "Untitled". The window has a menu bar with "Message" and "Options". Below the menu bar is a toolbar with various icons for text formatting (bold, italic, underline, strikethrough, color), alignment, and other functions. The email body is divided into sections for "From:", "To:", "Cc:", and "Subject:". Below these fields is the main content area, which contains the following text:

Dear Mary Brown,

Thank you for participating in the AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Community Solutions Summit/Event this past week/weekend. Your attendance helped make the event a resounding success! We appreciate your enthusiasm and genuine dedication to addressing poverty by building communities from within.

Continue to be involved in the AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary year:

- Share what you learned about or gained inspiration from during the Community Summit/event (Provide V50 hashtag and social media links)
- Share pictures and favorite moments from the Community Summit and event (Provide V50 hashtag and social media links)
- Visit [AmeriCorps.gov/VISTA50](http://AmeriCorps.gov/VISTA50) to find out more about what is happening next.
- Check out our Summit/Event photos [here](#).

Thanks again for all of your support,

John Davis



## EVALUATION SAMPLE

To be distributed and completed on the day of the event

### I am a (check all that apply)

- ☐ Current AmeriCorps VISTA member
- ☐ Current AmeriCorps member (state/national, NCCC)
- ☐ Potential member
- ☐ VISTA alum
- ☐ AmeriCorps alum (state/national, NCCC)
- ☐ CNCS staff
- ☐ Member of the community

Topic	Rating 1-5 (5 is the highest)	Comments
The event was engaging, and I got everything out of it that I wanted to – and more.		
I feel more connected to the broader AmeriCorps VISTA community as a result of today.		
I feel my contributions today will make a difference.		
I feel there are ample opportunities to continue to engage with the AmeriCorps VISTA community.		

What was the most useful thing that came out of today's event?

Briefly describe significant knowledge and/or skills that you gained from the event.

What could be improved about this event?

Additional Comments:



# THANK YOU!

If you'd like additional assistance to answer questions and navigate your planning, please contact us via email [VISTA50@cns.gov](mailto:VISTA50@cns.gov).

Additionally, we will be hosting webinars throughout the year to further aid you in planning your event. When registering your event, please be sure to include complete and accurate contact information, so we can send you updates regarding these opportunities.

Thank you for your involvement in the AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary commemorations. Your participation and leadership are integral to increasing AmeriCorps VISTA's impact – and to finding solutions to end poverty in the United States.